

DOCUMENTING INCIPIENT OBSOLESCENCE: a multi-pronged approach to Dhao, eastern Indonesia¹

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A visit to the island of Ndao, where they speak the Dhao language (Ethnologue/ISO code [nfa](#); 5,000–7,000 speakers), at first gives the impression of vigorous use by all ages in almost all contexts, including in many local government interactions and church meetings. Periodic contact and research spanning ten years, however, reveals cracks appearing in this seemingly healthy picture.

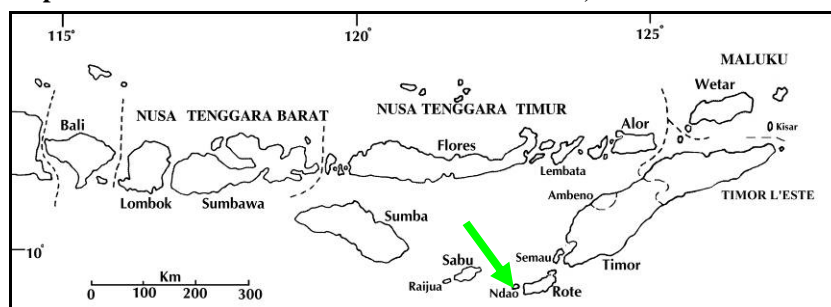
By working with various social segments of Dhao society for linguistic analysis, community-based dictionary-building (www.e-kamus2.org), community-based text collection, and community-based translation efforts, we can document which groups know and use the “original” vernacular Dhao words, which use long-established loans from various sources that have assimilated to Dhao phonology, which only know recent loans that haven't yet assimilated to Dhao phonology, and which grammatical constructions seem to be getting lost or conflating to simpler forms.

This paper discusses the discovery process, provides numerous examples of who is using what, shares comments on perceptions of trends and concerns of language use by Dhao speakers themselves, and reports some surprising trends when comparing social segments of society living on Ndao with those in the diaspora living elsewhere. It turns out that some of the younger generation in the diaspora have reasons that motivate them to learn and preserve Dhao (learning Indonesian and Kupang Malay are a given for them), whereas some of the younger generation on Dhao put their greatest efforts into learning and using Indonesian to have a chance to succeed in the wider world, while they are not even aware of the ways they reduce the kinds of social contexts in which they are exposed to other-than-normal uses of Dhao.

1. SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE

The tiny footprint-shaped island of Ndao lies 16.7 km to the northwest of Nembrala, Rote. The island is 5.5 km long and 2.3 km wide (at low tide) and is oriented from southeast to northwest. The inhabited villages are on the side facing northeast.

Map 1: The section of eastern Indonesia with Ndao, Sabu and Rote islands



Dhao women are renowned as traditional weavers using backstrap looms, and are often in demand by people of other ethnic groups as well. In addition to weavers active on Ndao itself, there is also a whole community of Ndao weavers in the community of Pantai Ndao on the north-central coast of Rote. Smaller weaving groups are found in Kupang and elsewhere. While most Dhao men are fishermen and sailors (many have “visited” Australia), they are more widely known as gold and silversmiths. Those seeking their fortune in this way leave the island during the dry season, travelling far and wide to other islands. Some have found natural sources of gold or silver

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elsewhere, have settled and intermarried where they can access their secret lode, and continue their trade as goldsmiths over decades. So Dhao men can be found scattered widely throughout the mountains of west Timor, as well as on other islands. In spite of being scattered and isolated, they seem to maintain social networks with other Dhao men in the region.

Walking around the villages, one hears people of all ages using Dhao fairly vigorously in most walks of life—with the key word being “most”. There are speech domains in which Malay (both Standard Indonesian and Kupang Malay) is encroaching on the use of Dhao. And modern life brings new domains that are often primarily associated with the outside world, and hence with outside languages.



The Dhao language was described very briefly in Walker (1982). Issues relating to the design of Dhao orthography are addressed in C. Grimes (1999), and more extensively in C. Grimes (forthcoming-b). The grammar of Dhao serial verbs is discussed and illustrated in Jacob & C. Grimes (forthcoming). An introductory dictionary is available online (C. Grimes, Ranoh, & Aplugi (2008), at www.e-kamus2.org). A number of books of the Christian scriptures have been translated and published (see references).

Dhao is most closely related lexically and phonologically to Hawu (Sabu, Sawu, ISO [hvn](#)), but both Walker (1982), and C. Grimes (forthcoming-a) argue that Dhao is a separate language, especially when one compares whole grammatical subsystems and syntactic typology. They both conclude it is not a dialect of Hawu as was previously thought. Dhao speakers interact intensively with speakers of Dela-Oenale (ISO code [row](#), Tamelan 2007) on the west coast of Rote, with some intermarriage (and bilingualism) there. The dominant nearby Rote culture is described in Fox (1977), and the Rote languages in Fox & C. Grimes (1995). Dhao speakers also interact intensively with speakers of Kupang Malay in and around the city of Kupang (ISO code [mkn](#), Jacob & C. Grimes 2003; Jacob & B.D. Grimes 2006; C. Grimes & Jacob 2008). Their contact with Indonesian, the national language, is primarily through school, government, and the mass media—similar to most rural Indonesians (C. Grimes, 1996).

Dhao is generally classified as a Central Malayo-Polynesian language (following Blust 1982, 1993, etc.), but C. Grimes, Therik, B.D. Grimes, & M. Jacob (1997), and Donohue & C. Grimes (2008), among others, raise questions about the nature of that higher-level classification in the light of more and better data.

1.1 Practical orthography

Given the complexities of the language, a principled and systematic orthography had to be worked out before speakers of Dhao could be trained to transcribe texts, translate, or write materials in their own language. The practical orthography has been worked out with the Dhao-speaking community in their homeland, in the community of Pantai Ndao on Rote, and in Kupang. It has been tested and refined over several years. With several publications in the Dhao language (see References), we are seeing successful and fluent readers that have had no direct contact with the ‘Dhao team’ that is producing these materials. Some of the orthography solutions were not ones thought of by ‘the linguist’ (=me), but nevertheless work quite brilliantly. The consonants are as follows (loan phonemes in brackets):

		<i>Dhao consonant inventory</i>				
		labial	apical	laminal	dorsal	glottal
STOP	VOICELESS	p	t	c	k	'
STOP	VOICED	b	d	j	g	
IMPLOSIVE		b'	d'	j'	g'	
AFFRICATE/RETROFLEX		bh	dh			#VV
FRICATIVE		(f)	s			h

NASAL	m	n	ny	ng
LATERAL		l		
FLAP/TRILL		r		
SEMIVOWEL	(w)		(y)	

IMPLOSIVES /b' d' j' g'/ are in contrast with the voiced obstruents /b d j g/. For example:

- (1) **bui** 'prison (Dutch loan)'
b'u'i 'smile'
babala 'response, reciprocation'
bab'a 'short, brief'
sabaj'a '1) pray, 2) worship (loan)'
sab'a 'work'
- (2) **de** 'so (consequently)'
ded'e '1) lift, elevate, 2) appoint'
d'eu 'bop on the back of the head'
do 'or'
d'oro 'thunder'
- (3) **jala** 'castnet (loan)'
jara 'horse'
j'ara 'path, road, way'
jaji 'promise' (**pa₁-jaji** 'promise each other')
j'aj'i 'become, come into being' (**pa₂-j'aj'i** 'create, cause to come into being')
- (4) **gale** 'summon with hand'
galaa 'accuse (formally)'
g'ala 'clay pot for carrying or storing water'
haga 'foot, leg'
hag'e 'choose, select out from a group of similar things'

/bh/ is a lightly affricated bilabial AFFRICATE. /dh/ is a lightly affricated, slightly retroflexed alveolar AFFRICATE (symbolized for convenience with the IPA symbol [ɖ]). #VV double vowel onset in the practical orthography is a non-glottal onset (in contrast with a glottal onset) that sometimes manifests itself as a light voiced pharyngeal fricative. Examples of these are given in the discussion of vowels below.

Dhao has a six-VOWEL system /i e ə a o u/. Schwa /ə/ is written in the practical orthography as /è/. Stress falls on the penultimate vowel (=syllable) of the root. In (C)əCV-shaped roots, the stressed /ə/ triggers phonetic lengthening of the following consonant. Because the lengthening is predictable, it does not need to be written in the practical orthography.

- (5) **èmu** 'house' [ʔəm:u]
èna 'six' [ʔən:a]
èpa 'four' [ʔəp:a]
èci 'one, a' [ʔət:fi]
èdhi 'we (inclusive)' [ʔəd:i]
èu 'you (2-singular pron)' [ʔəu]
bhèni 'female, woman' [bʃən:i]
bhèlu 'forget' [bʃəl:u]
dhèu 'person' [dʰəu]
mèu '1) clean, 2) clear, 3) daylight' [məu]
rèu 'leaf' [rəu]
rèhu 'face' [rəh:u]
papèda 'disease' [pa'pəd:a]

(6)	dhèu ae	‘many people, a crowd’
	dhèu aae	‘king’
(7)	èna	‘six’
	èèna	‘that, there, then (distal deictic)’
(8)	o	‘yes, affirmation (usually accompanied with a nod of the head)’
	oo	‘also’

- (9) **ra** 'they (3p subject, object, or possessive pronoun)'
raa 'blood'
ra'a 'they-eat'

(10)	nga tao ka	‘why?’
	ngaa	‘what’
	nga'a	‘we (exclusive)-eat’
	nganga'a	‘food’
(11)	sange	‘to this point’
	ngee	‘think’
	ne'e	‘this (proximal deictic)’

(12)	meda	‘yesterday’	[ˈmeda]
	mèda	‘night’	[ˈməd:a]
	mèdha	‘thing (concrete)’	[ˈməd:a]
	madhe	‘die, dead’	[ˈmaɖe]
	madenge	‘grossed out, repugnant’	[maˈdɛŋe]
	madhenge	‘guard, watch over, care for, herd’	[maˈɖɛŋe]
(13)	ana bebo	‘calf (of leg)’	[ˌʔana ˈbebo]
	babia	‘1) burden, 2) pregnant’	[baˈbia]
	bani	‘bold, courageous’	[ˈbani]
	bhèni	‘female, woman’	[ˈbʱɛn:i]
	bab’a	‘short, brief’	[ˈbaʁa]
	bèbhe	‘fall down’	[ˈʁəb:ʁe]
	bhèlu	‘forget’	[ˈbʱəl:u]
	bhelu	‘evil’	[ˈbʱɛlu]
	bela	‘lightning’	[ˈbela]

bèla
bhèla

‘cloth’
‘wide, broad’

['bəl:a]
['bʰəl:a]

Initially I was told “after various attempts we have concluded that our language cannot be written”. However, with good analysis, testing various options, and getting community input along the way, it's quite clear that not only can it be written systematically by an outside linguist, but more importantly for sustainable community-based literacy, Dhao speakers themselves can write their own materials and transcribe audio recordings on their own, using this tested orthography.

The ‘Dhao team’ has observed that most Dhao readers can pick up the ‘funny’ consonants, the schwa, short versus long vowels and intervocalic glottal easily. We have observed over several years that those who have the most trouble adjusting are the pastors and school teachers. This seems to be 1) they are the ones who have invested most heavily in Indonesian (which is much simpler phonologically), 2) although Indonesian is phonemically a six-vowel system, it is underdifferentiated and written with only the five vowels found on most typewriters (see Moeliono & C. Grimes, 1995), 3) Indonesian has no long vowels (phonemic sequences of like vowels), and certain non-diphthong sequences of vowels are read in Indonesian with an intervocalic glottal. For example, in Indonesian there is some intervocalic glottal insertion across morpheme boundaries, as in **keadaan** [kəʔadaʔan] /ke-ada-an/ ‘situation’, and **perumpamaan** [pəʔumpamaʔan] /per-umpama-an/ ‘allegory, parable’. Intervocalic glottal in sequences of like vowels in Arabic loans is written without indicating the glottal, as in **maaf, saat, jemaat, soal**. But because the glottal stop is a phoneme with high functional load found in so many Austronesian and Papuan vernaculars across Indonesia, the Indonesian National Language Institute (PPPBN) has provided for an alternate means of indicating glottals in Indonesian, using an apostrophe [']. So these words can alternately be written as **ma'af, sa'at, jema'at, so'al**. Given this noise, that makes some of the more educated school teachers and pastors some of the slowest to become fluent readers in Dhao. But after sticking with it for 2-3 hours, they are usually reading without any more stumbling. It is important to get them to that point, however, because they are the decision-makers who can promote or hinder the on-going use of reading materials in the local language.

1.2 A note on the name of Ndao vs. Dhao

The Dhao language itself has no /nd/ sound or sequence. The name “Ndao” is the pronunciation used by the politically and numerically dominant Rotinese from the nearby island of Rote, which does have the /nd/ sequence word initial. In their own language speakers use the name “Dhao”, as in **dhèu Dhao** ‘Dhao person’, **lii Dhao** ‘Dhao language’, and **rai Dhao** ‘the island of Dhao’. Because the official name in the Indonesian government system for the island is “Ndao”, I use that when referring to the island. But at the request of the speakers themselves, I use “Dhao” to refer to their language.

1.3 Variation in speech

There are several types of variation.

1.3.1 Pronunciation -- ideolects

With such a small group on a small island there is not broad variation in their speech. It tends to be more ideolectal than dialectal. One of the more common variations is under-articulation of implosives. Certain speakers are quite consistent in either lightly articulating or not articulating almost all their implosives. For example:

- | | | | |
|------------|---|-------|---|
| (14) d'ara | ~ | dara | ‘1) inside, 2) insides, seat of emotions and character’ |
| d'èi | ~ | dèi | ‘like, desire, want’ |
| d'ed'e | ~ | ded'e | ‘1) lift, elevate, 2) appoint’ |
| paj'uu | ~ | pajuu | ‘send, commission (with a task)’ |

hèb'a	~	hèba	'mouth, orifice'
hud'i	~	hudi	'must, have to'

A few words have variations around the pronunciation of schwa /ə/, as in the examples below:

- (15) **karèi** ~ **karai, krèi** 'beginning from (time)'
hèia ~ **hia, haia** 'then, and so (conjunction)'

A few loan words seem to be schizophrenic in their phonotactics, unsure whether to follow the more Dhao-like pattern of no CC clusters, or the more Indonesian-like pattern that allows them.

- (16) **paraluu** ~ **parluu** 'need' (Indonesian: *pərлу*)
paracaya ~ **parcaya** 'believe' (Indonesian: *pərcaya*)
dinitiu ~ **dintiu** 'kafir, traditional beliefs' (cf. Portuguese: *gentiu* 'gentile')
sakasii ~ **saksii** 'witness (in formal proceedings)'

1.3.2 Lii hini – ritual parallelisms and doublets

Lii hini is a ritual language register also sometimes sprinkled through normal speech to embellish it and make it beautiful. One prominent semantic feature is that it brings the *figurative senses* of words to the forefront, sometimes using meanings that are unique to this register. Structurally one sees poetic *parallelisms* and *doublets*. Doublets are also used in the common speech register, but not as extensively. In **Lii hini**, the second word in more obscure doublets may not be known by most speakers, but the first word carries the meaning. Similar patterns for other languages in the region have been described in Fox (1988) and a chapter in C. Grimes, Therik, B.D. Grimes, and Jacob (1997).

1.3.3 Lii pacele – secret insider's register

Lii pacele is a register sometimes used while fishing, but more commonly used as a secret insider's language in the presence of others who might know some Dhao. One feature of this register is shifted meaning of words, and fewer words, but many of them having a much broader or more generic range of meaning. Other registers of this sort have been described in more detail in C. Grimes and Maryott (1994). An implication for translated materials intended to communicate is that we avoid using words from this register, even though sometimes they are felt by some on the Dhao team to make a passage "more literary". Too many people don't know them.

1.4 Font issues

Many fonts do not have a clear distinction between a strong straight apostrophe ['] (to represent glottal), and a curved apostrophe used for single quotes, and double quote marks ["'"]. Many common computer fonts do not have strong diacritics, and so deteriorate or are lost after 2 generations of photocopying. Many common computer fonts also do not have a full range of Unicode glyphs.

We are finding that the *Gentium* (for production) and *Andika* (for early literacy) font suites deal with these issues in a way that is satisfying both technically and for readers in our region. Both fonts are downloadable at

www.scripts.sil.org/cms/scripts/page.php?site_id=nrsi&id=FontDownloads.

2. MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO DOCUMENTING AND PROMOTING DHAO

Involvement breeds ownership. Variety broadens involvement. A variety of activities involving Dhao speakers are described below. These are all actual activities that have involved Dhao speakers, not merely intended activities. It is through the *combination* of these various activities, that the emerging picture of incipient language obsolescence has begun to emerge.

2.1 Institutional context: Language & Culture Unit, Kupang

The 'Dhao Team' is working under the auspices of the Language & Culture Unit (UBB) of the GMIT church synod. This Unit is charged with spearheading efforts for Christian churches of all

persuasions for producing high quality meaning-based translations the Bible, making dictionaries, grammars, and promoting the effective use of vernacular languages in the ministries of the churches as well as in other sectors such as education.



Because there are teams currently working in 20+ languages, there is a synergy of cross-fertilization that happens at UBB. Not only do they see each other working as individual teams, but they compare notes across teams, talk about challenges they face in producing or translating materials, show off their published materials to each other with pride, and sometimes compete with each other. One church leader referred to this as “holy jealousy”. They share in training workshops, and interact with each other regularly over coffee breaks and meals. And the more gifted and experienced local team advisors, translators and multi-lingual education workers often give guidance or training to those just getting started on other teams.

At the time of writing, the members of the Dhao team at UBB are:

1. Rev. Dr. Ayub Ranoh, Th.D. (church minister, former academic vice rector of Artha Wacana Christian university in Kupang, former moderator of GMIT synod—with oversight over 2,200 congregations, recently retired and now rector of a small new university on Alor).
2. Drs. Michael Sina, Team Coordinator. (former school principal, recently retired inspector of schools in Kupang).
3. Lazarus Aplugi. (retired school principal from Dhao, now living in Kupang).
4. Rev. Margreth Erni Hake-Sina. (church minister; deceased-22 Feb 2005; keyboarded material onto the computer and functioned as team secretary until she died).
5. Helena Aplugi. (desktop publisher; took over keyboarding role).
6. Lazarus Lusi (clan leader; fisherman living on Dhao).
7. Charles E. Grimes, Ph.D. Team Advisor.
8. Paul Ledo (retired civil servant; occasional involvement)
9. (The Dhao speaking community)

A note on *management and documentation* in this context of working with local teams in 20+ languages, with each language having 30-100 book projects within it, plus team dictionaries. We have had to develop a robust system for:

1. File naming conventions;
2. Version control;
3. Consistent folder structure across different computers.

Without these we are dead—valuable material would be lost, newer files would be overwritten with older ones, bad work would replace good work, etc.

2.2 Natural Text Corpus

While the primary motivating factor for the involvement of members of the Dhao team is the translation of the Christian scriptures (see [§2.4](#) below), anyone with professional training in translation knows it's easy to produce translations that are awkward and unintelligible. Good translations are structured in their discourse, syntax, and idioms like *natural speech* of similar genres. So collecting natural texts has a three-fold purpose of:

1. Documenting the language and culture;
2. Providing a baseline of natural texts from which to model translated materials;
3. Providing material that can also be published to promote and stimulate pride in their heritage language, material for schools, and sustainable transmission of local knowledge.

Initially a few *audio* recordings were made, following the technical guidelines in C. Grimes (1992). However, technically good audio recordings didn't seem to do much to motivate any Dhao

speakers to do anything with those recordings. Besides, by the late 1990's most people in the region were already switching to CD technology, and moving away from cassette tapes.

More recently we have recorded a number of short stories using *video* technology. This gives a visual feedback that the whole community can appreciate over and over.

The visual format also turned out to be easier to train a speaker of Dhao to transcribe into **TOOLBOX** (See also www.sil.org/computing/catalog/show_software.asp?id=79). So far she has transcribed a number of videos of varying lengths (up to 90 sentences). But the videos are getting enough positive feedback that we expect to do a lot more of this, and eventually circulate them as subtitled compilations of stories—particularly those told by the better storytellers.

By working within TOOLBOX, we can then do *interactive concordance searches* of the whole text corpus, searching for words, phrases, or parts of words. We use it for validating claims of polysemy in dictionary entries. We also use the concordance feature to check for spelling consistency on editing. We use the *dictionary look-up* feature (the Jump feature) for both seeing what's already in the lexical database (is it complete? does the entry reflect this usage?), as well as for adding new entries.

While TOOLBOX can also help with *interlinearizing* for analysis, at this stage of the program we're beyond that for Dhao, so we are past the point of diminishing returns for the benefits we would gain from that exercise.

We use the TOOLBOX *export* feature, plus a macro in MS Word to get a fully formatted output of either the Dhao text, or a translation of that text in a matter of a minute or less, as illustrated below (the short story below reflects the raw data without any editing):

BÈI KAD'OGE

Dheu lole: Lazarus Lusi

¹ Bhèni heka èci, ngara na, Bèi Kad'oge. ² La'e dhasi loo nètu.

³ Mai nare be ngaa-ngaa.

⁴ Aa, nare are ca kakoko, ka la'e maj'u.

⁵ La'e ma..., la'e maj'u, ..., ka, are..., e, manu na'e aa'i are.

⁶ Ka na bèbhe aru, ka manu ne madhe. ⁷ Ka manu madhe, manu ne kokotoo.

⁸ “Kokoko ja'a! ⁹ Pamadhe more ja'a, ka èu tunu boe?” ¹⁰ Ka nare ka la'e tunu.

¹¹ Tunu nare, ka manu ne kokotoo hari, aku nèngu na, “Kokokoo! ¹² Tunu more ja'a, ka èu kacèbe boe?” ¹³ Aa, kacèbe.

¹⁴ Kacèbe nare, ka manu kokotoo, aku nèngu na, ¹⁵ “Kacèbe more ja'a, ka nasu boe?”

¹⁶ Ka nasu.

¹⁷ Ropa nasu nare, hèia manu ne kokotoo, ¹⁸ “Nasu more ja'a, ka mu'a boe?” ¹⁹ Ka na'e.

²⁰ Na'e nare (ja'a) ka, manu ne kokotoo hari, na, ²¹ “Mu'a more ja'a ka, èu po'e boe?”

²² Po'e ka, j'èje ka, hèia ele gage ca laa.

²⁵ Ka dhu pea era na.

²⁶ Dai sange ne'e ka.

Below is the English translation of the short text above, also exported from TOOLBOX to a formatted MS Word file in a minute or less.

GRANDMA KAD'OGE

Storyteller: Lazarus Lusi

¹ There was an old woman named Grandma Kad'oge. ² She went to the ocean at the mid-day sun [to look for food].

³ She didn't bring anything with her.

⁴ Well, she took a winnowing basket of rice, and went to pound the husks off,

⁵ She went..., she went to pound, and the rice..., e, a chicken ate up all the rice.

⁶ So she dropped the pestle [on the chicken], and the chicken died. ⁷ When the chicken died, it crowed,

⁸ "I crow, says me! ⁹ You have killed me, and you are not burning [my feathers off]?"

¹⁰ So she took it and went to burn it.

¹¹ When she finished burning it, the chicken crowed again, saying, "Kokokoo! ¹² You have burned me, and you are not cutting me open [to gut me]?" ¹³ So she cut it open.

¹⁴ When she finished cutting it open, the chicken crowed, saying, ¹⁵ "You have cut me open, and you're not cooking me [in liquid]?" ¹⁶ So she cooked it.

¹⁷ When she finished cooking it, then the chicken crowed, ¹⁸ "You have cooked me, and you're not eating me?" ¹⁹ So she ate it.

²⁰ When she finished eating it, the chicken crowed again, saying, ²¹ "You have eaten me, and you're not going to take a shit?"

²² She took a shit, then stepped in it, [slipped] and broke her leg.

²⁵ And she's still there now.

²⁶ That's all for now.

At the time of writing we are experimenting with various options to subtitle the texts with a highly readable font, put several story performances on a single DVD, and menu it. Not only will this help promote the heritage language, but will also contribute to the intergenerational transmission of local knowledge, develop reading skills alongside the audio and visual format, and model a principled and consistent spelling system (in contrast to the chaos of spelling and word break issues we are seeing on karaoke videos in local languages in the region).

We are finding a couple of challenges for involving local technicians in the task. The first inhibits sustainable development, since various computer programs suited to the task are either:

1. very expensive,
2. very difficult to set up,
3. very difficult to learn, or
4. limit the fonts that can be chosen within them (see [§1.4](#) above).

The second is cultural. Many local technicians want to show all the bells and whistles they can put into the scene transitions, whirling fonts, changing fonts style, font colours that don't show up against the background, etc. So the priority of communication and readability in the subtitles, and minimizing visual distractions has to be defined as a key parameter. We're working through this.

2.3 Dictionary

Initially for my own purposes, I began building a dictionary in TOOLBOX, following the **MDF** conventions and principles of lexicography laid out in



Coward & C. Grimes (1995, 2000; PDF version available at www.sil.org/computing/shoobox).

An early version of this dictionary was published as Aplugi, C. Grimes, Ranoh, & Sina (2000).

A more recent version of the Dhao Toolbox/MDF dictionary has been piped through **LEXIQUE PRO** (www.lexiquepro.com) and made available on the web as a work-in-progress. It is available in two forms—either interactive on the web (less complete and less elegant), or downloadable as a stand-alone dictionary (more complete and more elegant). It is also available on a stand-alone CD. This work is listed below in the references as C. Grimes, Ranoh, & Aplugi (2008) and can be found at www.e-kamus2.org.

I really wanted to get the Dhao community more involved in the dictionary-making process, in more ways than just as sources of data for me. Good TOOLBOX/MDF dictionaries, however, are a bit daunting to people who are new to both computers and to complex lexical databases. We have had limited success with one Dhao speaker using a beta-version of **WESAY** (www.wesay.org), to enter basic glosses. She has entered 706 very simple entries this way. We are intending to use this as a feeder file to work the information into the main lexical database and then expand it, following the suggestions for “team dictionaries” in C. Grimes (2006). We are anticipating further developments of WESAY will allow it to handle a more robust and complete subset of lexical fields as well as interact with a text corpus, and hopefully be able to at least read a fuller MDF lexical database, to reduce duplication of existing entries in the main lexical database.²

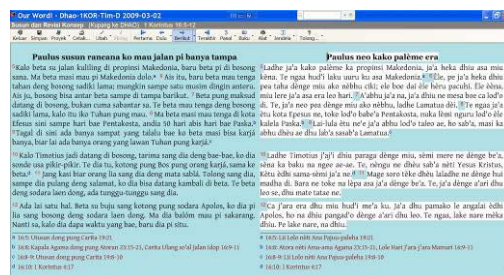
2.4 Translation

A number of translated books have been published in the Dhao language.

In translating the Christian scriptures into Dhao, UBB follows the principles of *meaning-based translation* recognized by most major Bible translation agencies today (the principles are detailed in: Beekman & Callow, 1974; Larson, 1998; Barnwell, 1986; Fee & Strauss, 2007, among others). We're aiming to *accurately* translate the meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew text, but render it in *clear* and *natural* Dhao as it is currently used by the younger generations (20-30 somethings). To accomplish this, there are several steps in the process, summarized below.

STEP 1: *Rough draft* by native speaker(s) from the Kupang **FRONT TRANSLATION**. Kupang is a Malay-based creole that has calqued on local grammars and metaphors, and works similarly to them in its discourse and idioms (Jacob & C. Grimes, forthcoming). Some translators prefer to do this on paper, as is the case with the Dhao team. However, we encourage them to do it directly on the computer using **OUR WORD**, to ensure they are using the latest refinements to the Front Translation. Some teams have different translators draft different chapters; most have one person draft the whole book, as does the Dhao team.

STEP 2: If the initial draft was done by hand, that draft is *keyboarded* into the computer by the Dhao team using **OUR WORD** (see screenshot). This may be done by the person who drafted it, or

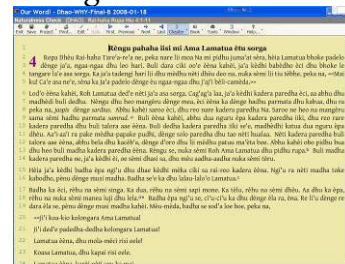


² This optimism is following discussions with the developers of WESAY, who travelled to Kupang in March 2008 and interacted with both myself and the Dhao woman who was making simple dictionary entries using WESAY.

by someone designated by the team for the task. This OUR WORD tool empowers the *mother tongue translator* (MTT) to focus on the translation process at hand and not have to worry about formatting issues, computer codes, or file management issues. The tool is bullet-proof enough that it also enables people with little or no computer experience to very quickly be able to work independently and remotely for months at a time without the need for on-going training or on-site computer support. (<http://ourword.theseedcompany.org/>)

STEP 3a: The whole MTT team of local translators (usually 3-5 people) gets together and revises the rough draft in OUR WORD, using their combined gifts and knowledge. For this step some of the members of the Dhao team living on Ndao come to Kupang to work with those living in Kupang. No outsiders are involved in this step. One person on the team is assigned to ensure that all the structural bits that are in the Front Translation (i.e. headers, verses, sentences, information footnotes) and all the elements of meaning that are in the Front Translation (e.g. phrases, connectors, adverbs, modifiers), are also in their draft. The whole team is charged with ensuring that all the elements of meaning relate to each other (chronologically and logically, but also naturally) in the *receptor language* (RL) the same way they do in the Front Translation. This pass looks at the Front Translation with a draft of the Daughter Translation side-by-side. (See screen shot above.) For some languages, translations in closely related languages are set up for the team in the Reference Translation pane. Nothing is skipped over.

STEP 3b: After the microscopic pass above (3a), the MTT team switches to the *Naturalness View* in OUR WORD. This hides the Front Translation, and presents the Daughter Translation in formatted paragraphs without verse numbers. Line numbers are given along one side of the text to facilitate discussion. The team reads a whole pericope at a time. They look for awkward or unnatural phrasing, or things that don't make sense. If they have to toggle back to the *Drafting View* to figure out what their draft is *supposed* to mean, then they know there is a problem that needs to be addressed. (See screen shot.)



STEP 4a: The whole MTT team does another detailed pass with their TEAM ADVISOR guiding the process. The Advisor is competent in Biblical languages, acceptable translation principles, and linguistics. This step focuses on exegesis, lexical choice, collocations, discourse, usage issues and naturalness. Translation principles are discussed in relation to specific issues that arise. If the Team Advisor has been doing their linguistic and discourse analysis, they are often the ones to alert the MTT's to issues with naturalness.³ This step is the most detailed of all the passes. Sometimes the MTT's wrongly exegeted the Front Translation; sometimes they were just lazy; sometimes they want to ignore or override the feedback from the community and Consultants in previous books, and sometimes they want to follow the Indonesian Bible (which is not meaning-based, clear, or natural).

STEP 4b: After the detailed pass above, we do another read-through pass using the *Naturalness View* in OUR WORD at the tail end of the Advisor Check, to check the same types of things as mentioned above for Step 3b.

³ I laid out a number of examples where MTT's often need to be alerted by a linguistically aware Advisor regarding unnatural rendering, in my keynote talk on "Naturalness" to the International Computer Technical Conference, November 2008, in Waxhaw, NC.

STEP 4c: At the end of the Advisor Check, the file is “locked” in OUR WORD. This is to guard the *integrity of the process*. This feature allows the team to still enter notes, comments or suggestions for any verse, but prevents them from making any changes directly to the text itself. At this stage we want them to discuss any proposed changes or suggestions with their TEAM ADVISOR to ensure that it conforms to sound translation principles, what has been discussed with the whole team, what has been discussed with UNS's from previous books, and what has been discussed with consultants for previous books. This also helps avoid the temptation of strong-willed individuals trying to change the text to get their way regardless of all of the above—just because they control or have access to the team computer.

STEP 5: Depending on questions that arise during the Advisor Check (Step 4 above) the MTT's may be given homework to informally check certain collocations, meaning of words, and whether the younger generation knows certain questionable or obscure words. Many teams want to involve socially or politically strategic individuals by getting their informal input at this stage. (This is an optional step and only touches on problems.)

STEP 6a: Comprehension testing or COMMUNITY CHECKING with uninitiated native speakers (UNS) in the communities in which the language is spoken on a day-to-day basis. This is with lay people who have not been involved in the translation. We don't use pastors, elders or Sunday school teachers for this step, because we want to test what the draft in the vernacular actually communicates, not what they remember or have been taught from the national language Bible. We try to get 3-5 testers, and welcome a peanut gallery, so in practice we have had up to a dozen UNS's participating. We try to get both male and female, young and old, but prefer to err on the side of the 20-30 year olds as the generation that will be using the translation into the future. We prefer people at the average educational level of that society. We have the readers read a paragraph or two (testing the orthography at the same time), and then ask them detailed questions about what they read. We ask open-ended information questions (who, what, where, why when). We are careful to avoid asking yes-no questions and leading questions. The answers to all of their questions are found in the text, unless we specify that we are asking for their opinion about something, “This is an opinion question: why do you think that...” We ask lots of low-level questions, and some high-level theme and connecting-the-dots questions, sometimes seeing if they can see the links with previous passages or teachings. We have taught some teams to do the UNS checks on their own, and this includes the Dhao team. Because they don't have the tools to evaluate the suggestions against the meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew, they simply report to the Team Advisor what the suggested changes are. We have trained them to give a) chapter and verse; b) current phrasing; c) suggested phrasing; d) reason for the suggestion. Most suggestions fall into just a few categories: a) fix grammatical cohesion; b) word not known by younger generation; c) lexical choice/collocation; d) phrase or modifier was following grammar of FRONT TRANSLATION language rather than RL, etc. Some teams are excellent at this, and some are hopeless. OUR WORD provides a reasonably well formatted printout for this step with only about three clicks of the mouse. During this step the MTT team has to listen to the feedback from the community, and is barred from arguing (e.g. *What do you mean you don't know this word? What are you, dumb? It's the right word, even if you don't know it!*), or clarifying and engineering the language (e.g. *Well, what we want this word to mean here is XX, so even though you normally understand it to mean YY, just go along with the team here...*)



- STEP 6b: If the MTT team does the UNS check (Community Check) without their Team Advisor, the resulting suggestions are later evaluated by the Team Advisor (exegetically, for naturalness, etc.) and incorporated or not, as appropriate. This often involves detailed discussion between the Team Advisor and the MTT team.
- STEP 7: In preparation for the final consultant check (Step 8), a very literal BACK TRANSLATION of the text is made into English (or the language of the Consultant). This includes additional notes on the grammar, conjunctions, idioms, discourse and exegesis for the Consultant. This Back Translation is intended to provide a very tight window on the translation for the outside Consultant who hasn't been working on that language.
- STEP 8: Final check with an external CONSULTANT. A Consultant accredited by an international Bible agency is brought in to check the comprehension of the translation in the RL by a group of lay people of various social and church backgrounds (as described in Step 6a) who have not been involved in the translation of the book under scrutiny. Through the process of the check, the Consultant ensures that: 1) this translation retains the meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew scriptures, 2) that the translation process and product follow recognized translation principles and recognized exegetical choices, and 3) ensures that the translation is rendered in a form of the RL that is both clear and natural. The process for this check is very similar to Step 6a above, but often more detailed, because the Consultant is an outsider not up to speed on local issues and usages. As in Step 6a, the MTT team has to listen to the feedback and understanding of the community here, and only get to have input when everybody works together to find good solutions to problems that surface during the check.
- STEP 9: Once the Consultant approves the translation, it is prepared for publication. The cover is designed. The MTT team is often involved in stylistic decisions. Picture permissions are obtained in writing. The final layout is done complete with pictures, footnotes, maps, cross references, parallel passages, etc. The 'master' is sent off to the printer. The team waits (sometimes several months) for the books to be printed and sent back to Kupang.
- STEP 10: In consultation with high level church leaders, the translation team, and local parish/presbytery leaders, the diocese/synod arranges for a book launching or dedication of the newly printed portion of scriptures among the people who speak that language. This may be a either big 'to-do' or something quite simple.

The reason I've laid all this out here is that Steps 6a and 8 provide a built-in opportunity with broader cross sections of society to get feedback about *meaning*, *usage*, and *naturalness* issues. So far these steps have involved several dozen Dhao speakers in addition to the team members. Many issues have come to light through this process that do not normally surface in the course of normal linguistic investigation with texts and dictionaries—even very detailed work. And at the time of writing, the Dhao team has gone through this entire cycle for different books of different genres 17 times, through Step 5 for three other books, and through Step 3 for an additional six books.

2.5 Spelling Guide

Developing, testing and modelling an orthography in publications is fine, as long as people take the initiative to use it. But many decision-makers (e.g. school teachers, church workers, and government officials) are outsiders who may have no interest in the local language and culture, and may even believe they should be putting down the local language in favor of “the national



language of unity” and misplaced zeal about development, based on wrong ideas about language policy.⁴

In order to help bridge this gap between policy and practice, UBB is producing a series of spelling guides in cooperation with the provincial Department of Education. These guides include

1. principles of good orthography design—general;
2. particular issues for writing that language, including how to handle certain morphophenic issues peculiar to that language;
3. a sketch grammar to raise awareness of the “genius” of that particular language and help people appreciate the patterns and functions that exist; and
4. an extended wordlist or mini-dictionary to provide a resource for spelling around 1,500 common words.

At the time of writing, the 75-page SPELLING GUIDE for Dhao is in press (C. Grimes, forthcoming-b). We are intending to make enough copies for school teachers, government officials and Dhao families to each get one. After giving input on a late draft of the spelling guide, two members of the Dhao team, Michael Sina and Lazarus Aplugi, both former school teachers, announced that as soon as the book is available, they are taking it out to Ndao to run training workshops for the school teachers there.

These spelling guides are made available not only to school teachers, but also to anyone who might want to develop bilingual education materials, try their hand at creative writing, or disseminate important information such as in the public health sector.

2.6 Bilingual Education Materials

Indonesian language and education policy allow for up to 20% of curriculum to be developed locally.

UBB is committed to helping whole societies become literate in their own language. To do that we aim to “flood the market” so to speak with 100 or so graded titles in each language. Some of the early literacy books are simple translations of books done for other languages in the region. More advanced books are either done as creative writing by native speakers, or as transcriptions with translations of video-recorded natural texts (see [§2.2](#) above).

While production in other languages is moving along, several Dhao books are written and keyboarded, but still awaiting pictures and editing.



We would ideally like to get Dhao people to illustrate Dhao books and stories, but our attempts to date have not met with success. The Dhao “artists” don't like the quality of their own pictures enough to let us publish them. We may have to use non-Dhao people to illustrate Dhao stories to get these books moving along.

2.7 Audio recordings

UBB works in partnership with Global Recordings Network to make high quality audio recordings of vernacular language material. We have made several recordings of Dhao, and these are occasionally played on the radio.



⁴ These well intended but ill-informed attitudes and practices among school teachers and other government officials aren't aware of and are often in violation of existing Indonesian laws, such as: Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor: 069/1993 tanggal 25 Februari 1993 tentang Kurikulum Pendidikan Dasar 20% Materi Muatan Lokal; Undang-undang Nomor: 222 tahun 1999 dan Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 25 tahun 2002; and Undang-undang Nomor: 20 tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia.

Culturally, however, neither the cassettes nor the audio CD's sell very well. Some who have bought the CD's complain, "I can get the sound, but where is the picture?" They are used to VCDs.

2.8 Radio broadcasts

With recent changes in Indonesian laws, local radio stations of varying broadcasting strength have recently been cropping up around the province of NTT. Most are spiritually motivated in their mandates. A few promote and regularly schedule programs in vernacular languages, including talk-back radio.

Personality-wise, not everyone on all the UBB teams is suited to talking on the radio. Some are simply too shy. Others jump at the chance. Fortunately Michael Sina on the Dhao team is one of the latter types, and has spoken on the radio several times using Dhao, about Dhao, about using and promoting vernaculars, and about effective communication. May his tribe increase.



GEMA INTI SUARA KASIH (89.3 Mhz FM) is a church-based station in Kupang whose license requires it to also broadcast in local languages. So they work closely with UBB, and often use not only our recorded audio material ([§2.7](#) above), but also often chase down the UBB translation teams to help them with various programs. They have regularly scheduled slots for vernacular languages.

RADIO LIZBETH (98.4 Mhz FM) is a popular privately owned Christian radio station that often plays songs in local languages. Occasionally they read SMS text messages from listeners in local languages, and play other vernacular material from UBB. A number of UBB teams have spoken on this station.

Both of these stations reach a range of a hundred kilometers or so when the conditions are right.

2.9 Training and awareness seminars *for* speakers of Dhao

UBB has endeavoured to find ways to provide formal training for members of the Dhao team, to increase their overall awareness of language-related issues as well as their skills.

Rev. Dr. Ayub Ranoh has participated in the following:

1. International Semantics Training Workshop. Sponsored by SIL International. Held at Kangaroo Ground, Victoria, Australia, November-December 1997.
2. Asia SIL semester-long accredited course on Translation Principles & Practices. Darwin, Australia, August-December 1999.

The *whole Dhao team* has participated in the following:

3. Translator Training Workshop on Translation Principles & Procedures-1, held at Alpha-Omega Community Development Training Facility, Tarus, NTT, Indonesia, June 2001.
4. Translator Training Workshop on Translation Principles & Procedures-2, held at Ina Bo'i Hotel, Kupang, Indonesia, 25-30 May 2003.
5. OurWord computer training workshop, run by John Wimbish in Kupang, October 2004.
6. Translation of specific books, 3-4 week workshops in Darwin, Australia, at the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004.



Helena Aplugi has participated in the following:

7. Training in MS Publisher, Darwin, Australia, July-August 2005.

8. OurWord computer training workshop run by John Wimbish in Kupang, 23 February-14 March 2008; (another scheduled for April 2009).
9. WeSay computer training run by John Hatton, Eric Albright and John Wimbish, in Kupang, March 2008.



Michael Sina and Lazarus Aplugi participated in the following:

10. Bilingual Education Workshop, jointly sponsored by the Cross-Cultural Communication Centre at UKAW and the NTT provincial Department of Education. Held in Kupang, 11-14 March 2003.

Michael Sina has participated in the following:

11. First Malaysian Indigenous People's Conference on Education (MIPCE), held in Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia, 23-30 April 2007, jointly sponsored by UNESCO, SIL International, and the Kadazandusun Language Foundation. (See www.sil.org/sil/news/2007/post-mipce.htm)
12. Heritage Language Literacy Development in Southeast Asia, held in Jakarta, Indonesia, 22-23 July 2008, jointly sponsored by SIL International, and Atma Jaya Catholic University. (See www.sil.org/sil/news/2008/se-asia-lang-conference.htm)

All of these have contributed to raising the awareness about language issues. After several of these activities, team members were on the first boat back to Ndao to share with others about what they learned.

2.10 Training and awareness seminars *by* speakers of Dhao

After the various seminars on multi-lingual education listed above, the two school teachers on the team, Michael Sina and Lazarus Aplugi, have taken the initiative to go out to Ndao, gather together school teachers, clan leaders, church leaders, and government officials to share and discuss what they learned. Some of their “ideas” from these conferences about promoting Dhao and keeping it in vigorous use have been well received, and some have been met with scepticism. The biggest challenges continue to be the misinformed ideas held by influential individuals that:

1. promoting their own Dhao language alongside the national language in the sector of education somehow violates the will and policies of the government, (it doesn't, as detailed above in §2.6);
2. their own Dhao language is unworthy of being used in church (it is not unworthy, and in fact it is the higher level church leaders that are sponsoring the local language translations and promoting their use—both Catholic and Protestant).

As mentioned above, when the Dhao Spelling Guide (see §2.5 above), is finished being printed, Michael and Lazarus are itching to take it out to Ndao at the end of the rain and wave seasons, and use it to train local school teachers and others to write material in Dhao.

They have also run some translation awareness seminars in several of the churches, discussing things like Bible translation for the common people, translation of key theological terms, the problem of some good terms not being known by the younger generations, and related issues of communication.

They have also done an admirable job of modelling the use of Dhao in preaching, praying, leading the liturgy, and running home Bible studies and prayer groups. People are so used to doing these things mechanically with minimal communication in the national language that they can't just flip a switch and start doing these things in their own language. Most of them have never thought about how to communicate some of these concepts in their own language. So seeing people model 1) that it can be done, 2) how to do it, and 3) what words and phrases have been thought through

and tested for both correct meaning and widespread comprehension is very significant in turning the tide.

They have also run some reading competitions on Ndao, including judges and prizes—who reads Dhao beautifully? People refer to these events even 2-4 years after the fact.

I'd like to note here that all of the activities mentioned in this section are unfunded, and have been carried out on the vision and initiative of Dhao speakers themselves.

2.11 Local language karaoke—a growing industry

For a couple years now, the best-selling karaoke in and around Kupang are productions with songs in local languages, referred to in Indonesian as “*pop daerah*” (local pop) and *lagu rohani daerah* (Christian songs in local languages). Store owners around Kupang tell us that productions in Standard Indonesian or from Java or Sulawesi just won't sell here. But Talita Doodoh's popular productions such as “*Yesus Malole*” (“Jesus is good”—song in Rotinese), and “*Lais Manekat*” (“Matters of the heart”—song in Uab Meto) and similar productions from other artists keep running out of stock. While the enthusiasm is obviously there, we have noticed the subtitles in the local languages are pretty chaotic in spelling and word breaks, and often pretty far off-base. For the sake of good literacy in local languages, the various language teams at UBB would like to help improve the quality of spelling.



Some local singer-producers, such as Daud Luji, a Dhao man, are starting to use aspects of some of the orthographies we at UBB have developed and tested with the local communities. We are hoping to work with him to help train his staff to have better editorial skills in writing the local languages in their productions.

3. THE PROCESS—FINDING OUT WHO KNOWS WHAT?

The activities described throughout section 2 above combine together to provide multiple opportunities to seek and obtain specific input and feedback from several dozen native speakers of Dhao of various ages spread over several years.

I note here two differences between what we do with natural texts, and what we do with translations. The TRANSLATIONS are intended to be *understood* by all segments of society. So following the principles of good meaning-based translation, if we encounter words in the draft that the UNS's don't know, then we don't use them, regardless of whether the meaning is correct or not. The translation of each book goes through several cycles of testing and editing to ensure this happens. We do assure people, however, that those little known words have been written down and will eventually appear in the Dhao dictionary with their usage limitations duly noted.

In contrast to that, NATURAL TEXTS are intended to help with the *intergenerational transmission* of language and culture. Thus the editing process of these focusses more on spelling and punctuation issues, as well as cleaning up false starts, and rarely on word choice issues, or “fixing the grammar” from someone's prescriptive ideas. If the storyteller chooses to use words that are not widely known, so be it. That style and choice will be reflected in the publication. This is where the younger generations can ask the older generations, “What does that word mean?” Or we may add a footnote.

3.1 Initiated by the Dhao Team

Most of the interaction that triggers new information and feedback is a direct result of involving people in the various activities described in section 2 above. The one that has yielded the richest feedback has been the translation activities, particularly steps 6 and 8. Note that this involves deliberately trying to find out what words people do not know, or do not know fully, or do not use widely.

3.2 Feedback initiated by the Dhao community

But during these other activities, there is also plenty of room for interested people to get involved—and they do. All of our activities on the island of Ndao invariably have a peanut gallery. There are extra women hanging out in the kitchen; extra men sitting on the porch; children crowding outside the windows (sometimes when they are supposed to be in school). We always welcome their participation and input, and try to draw them in. Some come in and sit with the others—sometimes day after day. Some sit on the sidelines, and occasionally whisper a question or suggestion to a friend with more confidence to speak up.

Several times on Ndao we also have had evening visitors with something to say. Sometimes it is an objection (e.g. “Why are you using everyday language that everyone understands? This is the Bible. You should be using the ritual language”). Or a criticism (e.g. Why didn't you use the Indonesian/Arabic loanword for ‘cross’? (a symbol that carries no meaning) Why did you use an ordinary phrase we understand as ‘crossed wood’?).

Sometimes groups of people who have been reading the previously published books will come to share their insights and suggestions. These are often individuals. Even though this often comes across as critical, nevertheless a couple members of the Dhao team have been quite excited by this, saying, “It shows they value what we're doing enough to scrutinize it, argue about it, and make the effort to give us feedback.” Some groups have sent a spokesperson to represent their questions.

A few people have come to talk with us about their observations that the younger generation doesn't seem to know Dhao as completely as they did when they were growing up. This provides natural opportunities to probe deeper, and offer a few suggestions. While there are exceptions, a common concern expressed to us is that most outside school teachers, church workers, and government officials don't make the effort to learn Dhao while they are stationed on the island, and often ignore the communication process in carrying out their responsibilities in a community with limited proficiency in Standard Indonesian. And they often actively discourage use of the local language, making people feel something is wrong with them, their identity, and their cultural heritage (even though these same outsiders might be quite proud of their own ethnic identity).

Intergenerational transmission of language and culture not happening in key situations. One context that has been brought to our attention is in the context of death. When someone dies, friends and relatives stay awake through the night with the grieving family. Traditionally there would be story-telling by the older generation to keep the grandchildren awake and involved. Now television and music CD's from the outside have replaced that for the most part. Some people are realizing that this is an area where things can be done proactively to reverse language shift.

4. THE RESULTS—WHO ACTUALLY DOES KNOW WHAT?

With some gendered activities, it is encouraging to see that:

1. Quite a few teenage girls and young women know many *nautical* terms, such as jib sail, tack into the wind, and depth-sounding;
2. Quite a few teenage girls and young women know many terms related to *gold-smithing*, such as, forge, bellows, purifying, and dross;
3. Quite a few men know many *weaving* terms, such as parts of the backstrap loom, phases of dying, dye colors, and names of patterns.

The examples below are representative of the kinds of things the younger generation (below 35) does not know (neither on Ndao nor in Kupang).

- (17) **pakanucu** ‘confer, evaluate together, try to understand s.t. that is not yet clear, discuss in detail looking for a solution’
udhu-rasa ‘ethnic group, tribe’ [about 80% of generation below 35 not know; Malay **suku** is widely used instead]
roe-bhilu ‘weak and vulnerable, worn out’ [**roe** known, **bhilu** not known]
kai-beko heka ‘no longer bound (to a promise/agreement)’
ag'o ‘trick, deceive, con’ [**kapod'e-kabèli** widely used]
karisi ‘more important’ [but **risi** ‘more than’ is known by all]
patari ‘begin’ [Malay **mulai** more widely used]
panano ‘get fancied up, dude up, priss up’ [a few older people also not know]
paga ‘rank (status, position)’ [assimilated loan from Malay **pangkat**]
toto ‘genuine, original, legitimate’ (as in: a genuine Dhao person)
piku ‘stray, deviate’ [about half the younger generation tested did not know this in context]
taa-taa ‘forever, eternal’ [reduplication of low-frequency **taa** ‘time’]

The examples below are representative of combinations or collocations that the younger generation does not know (neither on Ndao nor in Kupang).

- (18) **monya miu mamadha iia-iia** ‘you-pl are naïve, too easily tricked’ [accepted]
monya miu mamadha mea-mea ‘you-pl are naïve, too easily tricked’
[rejected or not known]

The examples below are representative of words that have one sense of a polysemous word not known by the younger generation (neither on Ndao nor in Kupang).

- (19) **pakabèle** ‘1) open one's hand, 2) disperse, 3) cancel an agreement’
[younger generation not know third sense]
(20) **udhi** ‘1) part of knife that sticks into the handle, 2) hold a grudge, look for revenge’
[younger generation not know figurative sense]
(21) **maho'o** ‘1) greet, 2) happy, glad’ [younger generation not familiar with second sense; normally use **karej'e** for this meaning]

The younger generation may be exhibiting signs of shift, as in the examples below.

- (22) **lee** ‘scrutinize’ [older generation sees this as neutral—either positive or negative; younger generation sees this as only negatively critical]
(23) **dhara hake** ‘waistband, belt’ [older generation]
dhari hake ‘waistband, belt’ [younger generation] (Note: **dhari** ‘rope, cord’)

Younger generation in Kupang does not know, but they do on Ndao.

- (24) **paj'ari** ‘make or establish a promise’ (focus on initial step, not on-going agreement)
ari ‘castrate (animals)’ [city kids not know, some on Ndao also not know]
padai-delu ‘compare, contrast’ [some older folks (60+) in city also not know]
hali ‘1) tasteless, insipid, 2) discouraged, disheartened’
[not know primary or figurative sense]
to'a ‘feel helpless and trapped, but also hoping for assistance’
mangojo ‘coax, persuade, cajole’ [low frequency; many other synonyms available]

Younger generation in Kupang knows, but not on Ndao. This is unexpected.

- (25) **abho** ‘forgive (asking or granting—focus on social action, not necessarily involving a change of heart)’ [known by younger generation in city]
ampun ‘forgive’ [Malay loan, not assimilated to Dhao phonotactics, used by younger generation on Ndao]

- saku eele** 'forgive, wipe away (not focusing on social action but on change of heart) [known by all]
- bhèlu eele** 'forgive, completely forget (not focusing on social action but on change of heart) [known by all]
- (26) **hahuku** 'punishment' (standard reduplication pattern to derive noun from verb) [younger generation on Ndao uses Malay **hukum** 'punish' and **hukuman** 'punishment']
- ènu** 'slave, lowly servant of no status'
- (27) **bara** 'help, assist' [not known]
- soru-bara** 'help, assist' [doublet known and OK]
- bantu** 'Malay loan: help, assist (often implies financially)' [preferred on Ndao, even though it hasn't assimilated to Dhao phonology]

After discussing with various groups, the following illustrate examples in which groups of Dhao speakers cannot reach consensus or a strong majority. Each person is convinced of the correctness of their usage and understanding, rejects the legitimacy of the other, and is unwilling to concede or bend. The first example below, is one we've been trying to nail down with various groups over 8 years, and still can't find much agreement.

- (28) **subha** Some say this means 'curse s.o., or put a curse on s.o.'; others say it means 'swear an oath' [Compare Malay **sumpah** 'swear an oath']
- soo-subha** Some say this means 'curse s.o., or put a curse on s.o.'; others say it means 'swear an oath'
- dhoo** Some say this means 'curse s.o., or put a curse on s.o.'; others say it means 'swear an oath'
- dhoo-saseo** Some say this means 'curse s.o., or put a curse on s.o.', but it is not widely known or used
- saseo** Some say this means 'curse s.o., or put a curse on s.o.', but it is not widely known or used, and their worldview says God cannot be the agent of this verb
- (29) **kapua aaj'u** Some say this means 'tree, plant'
- ana aaj'u** Others say this means 'tree, plant'
- (aj'u** '1) tree, 2) wood' [Note: PAN ***kasiw** '1) tree, 2) wood']]
- (ana** '1) offspring, child, 2) small, 3) one of category x' [Note: PAN ***anak** 'child']]
- (kapua** '1) main trunk and main roots, 2) main of category x, 3) base, source, 4) beginning (e.g. of story), 5) cause, reason (for dispute)')
- (30) **deo ne'e** '1) immediate past, within preceding hours, earlier, 2) today'
- doe ne'e** 'today'
- (31) **dara makae** 'feel ashamed/embarrassed'
- makae dara** 'feel ashamed/embarrassed' [some says this is influence from Sabu—even though they don't know Sabu; it's a way of dismissing the other point of view]

There are many more examples in our data of all these sorts of things.

4.1 Adjusting the materials

As mentioned above, with translated materials intended to *communicate* with as broad an audience as possible, we weed out these sorts of words.

In the dictionary, we preserve them, and make notes on their usage.

In natural texts and bilingual education materials, we preserve them, and hope the community will be transparent enough with each other that they will ask about and be willing to explain to each other about words and meanings that not everybody knows.

5. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Even though all age groups continue to use the language vigorously and daily, it is clear that the Dhao-speaking community has started down the slippery slope of language obsolescence. As with most communities, this is something that has been developing in a passive way. While there are deliberate efforts to learn Indonesian and “not be left behind” in the modern world, there is not also a deliberate effort on the part of the community or individuals to *not learn* Dhao. It just happens through neglect. But it is the neglect of whole families and segments of society.

The kinds of social contexts and activities where intergenerational transmission of Dhao traditionally happened are being elbowed out by modern forms of entertainment, an externally oriented educational system, externally oriented school teachers, externally oriented church workers, and externally oriented government officials.

The Dhao-speaking community is growing in language awareness, and this awareness is leading some to make choices that include *both* the Dhao language and the national language. While this is encouraging, many families are blindly continuing the practice of putting all their efforts into having their children learn the national language, to the neglect of Dhao.

Oddly, those individuals who are truly bilingual, and can function fully as contributing adults in Dhao society, and also as contributing adults in the national culture and language, are seen to be leaders, and seen to have advantages that others who are only semi-lingual in either language do not have. But most people are not connecting the dots in this way.

There are young Dhao people on Ndao who control a great range of vocabulary and grammar. And there are those who do not. There are young Dhao people in Kupang (who have never lived on Ndao) who also control a great range of vocabulary and grammar—more than some of their peers on Ndao. And there are those who do not. Looking at individual cases, my conclusion is that in both contexts, the key is the attitudes and opportunities provided by their family and those they most often interact with.

We are hopeful that the activities, materials and forums for interaction described in this paper, along with encouraging the older generation to reinstate practices such as story-telling during the long nights of sitting with families after someone has died, will position Dhao society to both preserve their unique ethnic identity and heritage language for their children and grandchildren into the future, as well as succeed in the outside world, as so many from this small group already have. They can have both, but they have to choose to have both.

We are also hopeful that the activities, materials and forums for interaction described in this paper will begin to have an effect on outside school teachers and church workers who can be so influential in a society. By providing materials they can use that are ‘approved’ by their superiors, they are more likely to use or at least allow their use, than if they continue the attitudes and practices that frown on the use of local vernaculars.

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